



Coping with Coyotes

"Most coyotes pose little threat to humans. The problems generally start when people feed coyotes, even if that feeding is unintentional."

– Stanley Gehrt,
Ohio State University researcher

Coyotes were rare or uncommon in Indiana until the early 1970s. They have since adapted to the Hoosier landscape and are present throughout the state, including urban areas. To reduce the chance of human-coyote conflicts, it is important to understand their behavior and to consider the following advice from the U.S. Department of Agriculture-APHIS-Wildlife Services:

- Do not feed coyotes
- Feed pets indoors whenever possible; pick up leftovers if feeding outdoors and store pet and livestock feed where it's inaccessible to wildlife
- Eliminate water bowls and other artificial water sources (if possible)
- Position bird feeders in a location that is less likely to attract small animals or bring the feeders in at night (to keep coyotes from feeding on the bird food or the other animals)
- Do not discard edible garbage where coyotes can get to it
- Secure garbage containers
- Trim and clean shrubbery near ground level to reduce hiding cover for coyotes or their prey
- Do not allow pets to run free and provide secure nighttime housing for them
- If you start seeing coyotes around your home, discourage them by shouting, making loud noises or throwing rocks but NEVER corner a coyote – always give the coyote a free escape route.

Farmers with livestock can take additional precautions, such as:

- Use net-wire or electric fencing to keep coyotes away from livestock
- Shorten the length of calving or lambing seasons
- Confine livestock in a coyote-proof corral at night
- Use lights above corral
- Use strobe lights and sirens to scare away coyotes
- Remove dead livestock promptly so coyotes won't be able to scavenge
- Use guard animals, such as dogs, donkeys and llamas to protect livestock

Landowners, or a person with written permission from a landowner, may take coyotes year-round on private property. A landowner does not need a permit to take coyotes on his/her property, but a hunting or trapping license is required to hunt or trap coyotes on land other than your own.

If these suggestions don't help, Indiana residents can call the Wildlife Conflicts Information Hotline at 1-800-893-4116 (persons in the Lafayette area or outside Indiana should call 765-496-3968) during normal business hours or visit our website at: www.IN.gov/dnr/fishwild. The Hotline is a cooperative program of the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Purdue Extension Service, and the Indiana Department of Natural Resources.

COYOTE INFORMATION

GENERAL CHARACTERISTICS: The coyote is slightly smaller than a standard collie dog in size and is similar in shape. It has a long slender snout, pointed ears and comparatively long legs. The upper body is grizzled gray or buff, with a reddish brown or gray muzzle. The lower body is white, cream-colored or reddish yellow. The coyote has a bushy tail, which it carries below the level of its back. Weights average 30 lbs (range from 20 to 50 pounds), and they measure 40 to 50 inches in length from nose to tail tip.

BEHAVIOR: Coyotes are elusive and normally avoid humans. They can be active any time of day or night, but are observed more typically at dawn and dusk. The coyote communicates by barking, yelping and howling. Coyotes will develop a “search image” for a prey type that is more easily scavenged or killed. A “search image” includes visual, auditory and olfactory senses.

Coyotes may pair up for life. They mate in February, and a litter of 5 to 10 pups is born in a den during April. The den is often located in a bank or on a hillside, or it may be an enlarged woodchuck or rabbit burrow. When the pups are old enough to take solid food, they are fed by both parents, who provide instruction on how to hunt until the fall months, when the youngsters are nearly full grown and ready for life on their own. Coyotes usually hunt as singles or pairs and may travel extensively to secure food.

FOOD: Coyotes are opportunistic foragers that will consume anything of nutritional value. Coyotes primarily feed on small mammals, even in urban environments, but they will not turn down an easy meal, nor will they pass up a free meal of artificial food sources. They will scavenge exposed garbage or other refuse, and may even kill and consume house cats and small dogs.

LEGAL STATUS: Coyotes are wild animals protected by Indiana law, which requires the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) to provide for the protection, care, management, survival and regulation of wild animal populations. The DNR Director is required to establish the methods, means and time of taking, chasing and selling wild animals under the authority given in Indiana law (Indiana Code 14-22-2-6).

MANAGEMENT: The DNR controls the population of coyotes primarily by a regulated hunting and trapping season. A trapping or hunting license is required, unless the individual is hunting or trapping on land he/she owns.

In addition, Indiana law (Indiana Code 14-22-6-12) allows coyotes to be taken year-round by a landowner or person designated in writing by the landowner without a permit from the DNR. Landowners who need assistance with nuisance coyotes can also hire a person with a nuisance wild animal control permit to take coyotes throughout the year.



illustrations of paw prints: Mark Raithe,
Missouri Department of Conservation

